UNITED
NATIONS

A

General Assembly

Distr.
GENERAL

A/47/187
4 May 1992

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Forty-seventh session
Item 88 (b) of the preliminary list*

SPECIAL ECONOMIC AND DISASTER RELIEF ASSISTANCE: SPECIAL PROGRAMMES OF ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE

Note verbale dated 30 April 1992 from the Permanent Mission of Botswana to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Botswana to the United Nations presents its compliments to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and has the honour to transmit His Excellency the President of Botswana, Sir Ketumile Masire's text on Declaration of year 1991/92 a drought year (see annex).

The Permanent Representative would be very grateful if the text could be circulated as a document of the General Assembly under item 88 (b) of the preliminary list.

* A/47/50.

ANNEX

Declaration on drought by the President of Botswana, Sir Ketumile Masire, issued on 29 March 1992

1. It is with much regrert that I have to address the nation today in less than three years on the subject of drought. You will recall that we experienced a very severe and long spell of drought during the period 1981-1987. This was followed by a period of normal to near normal rainfall during 1988 to 1991. It is obvious from the agro-meteorological data that the 1991/92 season has experienced severe and widespread rainfall failure.

2. The cumulative rainfall since the beginning of October has generally been deficient over the whole country with most parts of the country having received between 20 per cent and 40 per cent of their normal rainfall.

3. As a result, very few Batswana in communal areas ploughed during this season. The area planted is estimated at 64,000 ha as compared to 305,400 ha in 1989/90, and 164,100 ha in 1990/91. Whilst it is always difficult to make reliable forecasts of output in arable agriculture, we estimate that production of the staple crops in the 1991/92 season will be 5,000 mt as compared to 25,000 mt in 1989/90 and 36,000 mt in the 1990/91 season.

4. With regard to the commercial arable subsector only 12,676 ha have been planted in Pandamatenga this season. Given the total destumped area of 17,500 ha, this represents only 72 per cent of the cultivable land. This is significantly lower than the 17,100 ha planted in the 1989/90 and the 17,164 ha planted in 1990/91 season. The cereal output estimated at 10,000 mt is lower than the 13,000 mt realized in 1989/90 and the 1990/91 crop of 19,000 mt. The total combined production for both the commercial and communal areas is estimated at 15,000 mt of grain this season as compared to total production of 55,000 mt in each of the 1989/90 and 1990/91 seasons.

5. The grazing and livestock condition is generally poor throughout the country, except for the Chobe area. Although the November/December rains benefited grazing, full recovery has not been achieved as the grass could not mature because of the hot and dry spell that followed. Water shortage aggravates this situation. Wells, pans, and other surface catchments are reported to be dry, while borehole yields are steadily declining. Thus a water shortage problem especially in the major villages where demand has outstripped supply is imminent.

6. Regarding nutrition, prevalence of underweight children at both the national and the district level has remained stable. The national average of underweight children remains at 15 per cent of children all under five years attending Child Welfare Clinics.

7. Compared to last year, more districts have reported some improvement in the nutritional status of the under-five children. However, given that the monthly attendance at Child Welfare Clinics covers only an estimated 45 per cent of the population of children under five, the nutritional surveillance figures may not give a complete picture of the prevailing undernutrition.

8. The major conclusion from the drought assessment is that on the basis of the agro-meteorological data presented, there has been widespread rain failure or drought this season. The failure of the rains was severe and widespread with the implication of significant and widespread crop failure. The widespread crop failure resulting from inadequate rainfall has significantly reduced arable agriculture-based incomes on which the majority of our people depend.

9. The failure of the rains this season was not restricted to Botswana. It has affected the entire region. The regional situation itself has been deteriorating over the past few seasons with the result that the SADDC regional opening stocks are estimated to have fallen from around 2.92 million tonnes at the beginning of the 1990/91 marketing year to about 1.54 million at the beginning of the 1991/92 marketing year.

10. Botswana's traditional suppliers, South Africa and Zimbabwe, themselves have had to restrict foreign export. It is on the basis of this severe nad widespread rain failure that my Government has decided to declare 1991/92 a drought year.

11. Following the six-year drought, the Government instituted a major evaluation of the Drought Relief and Recovery programme in 1990 in order to assess the success and failures of the relief programme and to identify positive measures that would be applied in future relief programmes. Based on the evaluation, Government has adopted policies regarding future drought responses. The main thrust of these policies is:

(a) The incorporation of drought preparedness into regular long-term development programmes, thereby reducing the need to mount a separate large relief programme in the event of drought.

(b) The adoption of stricter targeting criteria for all beneficiaries of future drought relief programmes, as well as avoidance of all input subsidies as an element of relief. This is in line with the established NDP 7 policy of targeting subsidies.

(c) The implementation of a labour-intensive public works programme as a major way of creating employment and providing relief during drought.

12. Therefore, whilst noting the severity of the drought and the need for Government intervention, the assistance that Government will provide, will have to take into consideration the lessons from the evaluation of the last drought relief and recovery programme and should conform to the already agreed-upon policies on drought management resulting therefrom. In this regard, Government has therefore decided to implement a package of human relief programme focused mainly on the creation of employment opportunities through a labour-intensive public works programme.

13. Projects that will form the core of the programme have been identified at the national level through the Ministries of Agriculture, Works, Transport and Communications, Mineral Resources and Water Affairs, and Local Government, Lands and Housing. These are projects already included in NDP 7.

14. In addition, the District Councils with the help of the Ministry of Local Government, Lands and Housing will identify projects in their respective district development plans for implementation as part of the proposed programme.

15. It is, however, recognized that the projects identified in both NDP 7 and the District Development Plans may not cover the entire country. Therefore additional projects will be identified by the various districts to be included in the programme so as to ensure broad coverage.

16. Furthermore, supplementary feeding for all under-five children will be provided. In addition the Ministry of Local Government, Lands and Housing will work with the District Councils in determining the adequacy of human drinking water in all villages.

17. With regard to agriculture, ALDEP will remain the main vehicle for assisting small arable producers. For large arable producers, the Agricultural Credit Guarantee Scheme will be invoked for those farmers who received seasonal input loans and were enrolled with the scheme. Regarding livestock, it has been decided to accelerate the implementation of the livestock water development project. These measures will be implemented with effect from 1 June 1992.

18. In the past we have benefited immensely from the generous support provided by our friends in the international community. We appeal to the international community to support our reformulated drought relief programme. I also trust that they will be encouraged by our efforts to incorporate drought preparedness in our national development efforts as evidenced by this reformulated programme. It is my hope that these measures wil help to build the rural economy on a sustainable basis.

PULA! PULA! PULA!